



California Teachers Empowerment Network

Standing out from the crowd, fully informed on the issues

July 21, 2009

Dear Colleague,

As many of you are traveling and have your minds on things other than teaching, we typically try to keep our summer letters very brief. However, this year will be an exception. There is a lot going on and for those who miss this letter, we will repeat the salient information in September.

If you were not at the yearly NEA Convention in San Diego earlier this month, you missed a most interesting speech by outgoing NEA general counsel, Bob Chanin. For the first part of his 25 minute speech, Mr. Chanin was pleasant enough recalling with fondness his 41 years as NEA's top lawyer. But at 15:30 "Uncle Bob" switched gears and started lobbing grenades at perceived NEA enemies who he deemed "conservative and right wing bastards." While his candor was refreshing, he did make one statement that he *had* to know was untrue. He said that "...there are more than 3.2 million people who are willing to pay us hundreds of millions of dollars in dues each year..." Every one of us who of us lives in a non-right-to work state has to cringe at the word "willing." To watch Mr. Chanin's speech, please go to <http://tiny.cc/cgmse>

At the same time that Mr. Chanin was hurling invectives toward people on the right, a stunning report was released by the liberal Citizen's Commission on Civil Rights. In this report, [National Teachers' Unions and the Struggle Over School Reform](#), the teachers unions are accused of consistently blocking any and every meaningful education reform effort. The 36 page report is well worth reading, but you can get the gist of it by reading the two page "Conclusion and Recommendations" at the end of the report.

Continuing on the education reform theme - *The Cartel* promises to be an excellent documentary on this subject. (I say "promises" because the final cuts haven't been made. Producer Bob Bowdon was kind enough to send me a rough cut.) While it deals mostly with New Jersey, the documentary speaks to the entire country. And Mr. Bowdon obviously hit a few nerves - the New Jersey Education Association has already come out swinging. Please check out the website - <http://www.thecartelmovie.com/>

The Pacific Research Institute's Rachel Chaney has written a compelling article about the particular problems that military families encounter when trying to educate their children. These families tend to move around a lot, and as a result their children can sometimes get

stuck in bad schools. According to Ms. Chaney, “The Senate Armed Services Committee is considering a proposal to provide military families with tuition vouchers. The idea enjoys support in the military, but the National Education Association (NEA) has mounted an attack in a letter to the Committee as part of its ongoing battle against educational choice.” To read the article, please go to - <http://tiny.cc/Zlavp>

In the summer 2009 issue of *Education Next*, there is an excellent piece on tracking. The article revolves around a recent study done in Kenya in which tracked and untracked students were compared. To read about this very thoughtful study, please go to <http://tiny.cc/yq9Zo>

For those of us who don't quite get the ins and outs of AYP and API – and there are many of us - Ed-Data provides a reasonably understandable explanation on their website. As NCLB is likely to come up for a vote this year, this information - <http://tiny.cc/hQgGx> - will be helpful.

In these tough economic times, when anything considered to be an educational luxury is being stripped away by our embattled state legislature, we at CTEN will have a pleasant surprise for our followers in September. We promise you will like what we have in store. Please stay tuned.

In any event, please check our website regularly – www.ctenhome.org - we do our best to keep it informative and up-to-date. Also, please check out our media page - <http://www.ctenhome.org/media.htm> We firmly believe that having a presence in the mainstream media as well as the new media is an important way to reach independent-minded teachers. And of course, if you think these letters are helpful, please send them a long to anyone who might benefit from them. As always, thank you for your continued interest and support.

Sincerely,

Larry Sand, President